

NAGASE

Application No. 09/921,601

Response to Office Action dated June 4, 2004

Remarks

Reconsideration and allowance of the subject patent application are respectfully requested.

Claims 1-4 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. Section 102(b) as allegedly being "anticipated" by Hiroshi (JP 10-20769). For the reasons set forth below, Applicant traverses this rejection.

As described in the specification with reference to the illustrative, non-limiting, example embodiments, a push part (by way of example, element 11 in Figure 1) which is operated by pushing comprises a braille output device that outputs a plurality of braille patterns. A processing system (by way of example, controller 16 in Figure 4) detects an input when the push part is pushed within a predetermined time period after braille patterns are output by the braille output unit. The processing system detects that there is no input when the push part is not pushed within the predetermined time period. In addition, the specification describes that the braille pattern can be moved across a surface of the braille output device.

JP 10-20769 discloses a braille device that permits a person to change the change the speed at which braille patterns are output. Specifically, an accelerating key 14 increases the rate at which patterns are output and a decelerating key 15 decreases the rate at which patterns are output. However, in JP 10-20769, the "tactile-sense display" 13 with dot pins 12 only functions as a braille output device -- there is no disclosure that this tactile-sense display is part of an input means as specified in claim 1. The office action apparently views the dot pins 12 as constituting an input means having a push part that is operated by a pushing operation. See office action, page 3. However, there is no disclosure in JP 10-20769 of such an operation being associated with the dot pins 12 and indeed a pushing operation involving the dot pins would make it difficult for a visually impaired person to recognize braille patterns since the touching of the pins might cause them to be pushed in. In addition, while JP 10-20769 discloses various input devices (e.g., keys 14 and 15 in the Figure 1 embodiment; keys 44, 45 and 46 in the Figure 4 embodiment; etc.), there is no disclosure of providing any of these input devices with a Braille output device.

Further, there is no description in JP 10-20769 of recognizing that an operation concerning the braille patterns output by a braille output unit is input when a push part is pushed within a predetermined period of time after the braille patterns are output by the braille output

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unit as specified in claim 1. The timer setup mentioned in paragraph 26 of JP 10-20769 and referenced in the office action in connection with this claim feature relates to timing at which braille patterns are output and has nothing to do with whether an input is recognized within a predetermined period of time after a pattern is output.

For at least these reasons, JP 10-20769 cannot anticipate the subject matter of claim 1.

Claims 2-4 depend from claim 1 and are believed to be allowable at least because of this dependency and because of the additional patentable features recited therein. By way of example, claim 2 calls for the moving of braille pattern outputs along a transverse direction which is perpendicular to a direction of the projection of the dotted portions. There is no disclosure in JP 10-20769 of such a feature.

New claims 5-25 have been added. The subject matter of these claims is fully supported by the original disclosure and thus no new matter is added. Claim 5-8 each depends from claim 1 and is believed to be allowable because of this dependency and because of the additional patentable features recited therein. By way of example, there is no disclosure in JP 10-20769 of recognizing that there is no input when the push part is not pushed within a predetermined period of time after the output of braille patterns as specified in claim 5.

Claims 9-16 are based on claims 1-8, but, for example, do not include means-plus-function recitations. These claims are believed to be allowable for reasons similar to those advanced above with respect to claims 1-8.

Claim 17 calls for a user-actuatable input device comprising a braille output surface for outputting braille characters. As noted above, JP 10-20769 discloses various input devices, but none comprise a braille output surface. Accordingly, claim 17 and its dependent claims 18-25 are allowable.

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The pending claims are believed to be allowable and favorable office action is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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